DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 422 093 PS 026 775

AUTHOR Aten, Angela; Mueller, Deborah; New, Diane; Peschang, Teresa
TITLE Parent Involvement: Improving School Climate and Strengthening Relationships Among the Parent Community.
PUB DATE 1998-05-04
NOTE 90p.; Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University and IRI/Skylight Field-Based Masters Program.
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses (040) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Action Research; Elementary Education; *Family Involvement; Family School Relationship; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Volunteers

ABSTRACT

This action research project involved the implementation and evaluation of a program for increased parental involvement at an elementary school in western Illinois. Evidence for the lack of parental involvement included declining membership in the Parent-Teacher Organization, elimination of the computer lab, limited library hours due to lack of volunteers, elimination of the spring school carnival, and a lack of parental attendance at various classroom functions and field trips. Analysis of probable cause data revealed a large number of working parents and a changed household structure, along with a lack of trust and respect for faculty, partially due to a 1992 teacher strike compounded by difficult contract negotiations in 1996. A review of solution strategies, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of three major categories of intervention: communicating, volunteering, and learning. Activities implemented to increase parent involvement included: the Parent Involvement Pledge, student homework and reading pacts, Family Reading Night, Family Math Night, a district-wide Parent University Night, and Volunteer Appreciation and Recognition Night. Assessment methods indicated that these activities improved the school climate and strengthened relationships within the parent community. (Appendices present activity materials, including surveys, cover letters, articles, newsletters and calendars. Contains 28 references.) (EV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 422 093

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Improving School Climate and Strengthening Relationships Among the Parent Community

Angela Aten
Deborah Mueller
Diane New
Teresa Peschang

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Angela Aten
Deborah Mueller
Diane New
Teresa Peschang

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Saint Xavier University
Chicago, Illinois
May 4, 1998

PS 026775

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SIGNATURE PAGE

This project was approved by

D. Nancy Fiskes, Ph.D
Advisor

John B. Mulkey Ed.D
Advisor

Beverly Lucas, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Education

ABSTRACT

This report described a program for increased parental involvement at the targeted elementary school that improved school climate and strengthened relationships among the parent community. The targeted population consisted of students and parents of the students in kindergarten, first, second, and fourth grades, in a middle class community, located in western Illinois. Evidence for the existence of the problem included declining membership in the Parent-Teacher Organization, elimination of the computer lab, limited library hours due to lack of volunteers, elimination of the spring school carnival, and a lack of parental attendance at various classroom functions and field trips.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed that there was a large percentage of working parents, and the household structure of the American family had changed. The faculty had experienced a lack of trust and respect within the community, partially due to the teacher strike in 1992. This lack of trust and respect was compounded by difficult contract negotiations in 1996. These factors contributed to a noticeable decline in parental involvement at the targeted elementary school.

A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of three major categories of intervent: communicating, volunteering, and learning. The following implemented activities increased opportunities for parental involvement: the Parent Involvement Pledge, student homework and reading pacts, Family Reading Night, Family Math Night, a district-wide Parent University Night, and Volunteer Appreciation and Recognition Night. These implemented activities improved the school climate and strengthened relationships within the parent community.

The action research team investigated a systematic approach for organizing parental involvement in building community support for the school. Due to the commitment of the action research team, along with additional support from school staff and parents, this project was successful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 - PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT.....1
General Statement of the Problem.....1
Local Setting.....2
The Community Setting.....5
National Context of the Problem.....7
CHAPTER 2 - PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION.....10
Problem Evidence.....10
Probable Causes.....11
CHAPTER 3 - THE SOLUTION STRATEGY.....15
Literature Review.....15
Project Objectives and Processes.....21
Project Action Plan.....22
Methods of Assessment.....23
CHAPTER 4 - PROJECT RESULTS.....29
Historical Description of the Intervention.....29
Presentation and Analysis of Results.....33
Conclusions and Recommendations.....39
REFERENCES.....42
APPENDIX A.....45
APPENDIX B.....46
APPENDIX C.....47
APPENDIX D.....48
APPENDIX E.....49
APPENDIX F.....50
APPENDIX G.....51

APPENDIX H.....52
APPENDIX I.....53
APPENDIX J.....54
APPENDIX K.....55
APPENDIX L.....56
APPENDIX M.....57
APPENDIX N.....58
APPENDIX O.....59
APPENDIX P.....60
APPENDIX Q.....61
APPENDIX R.....62
APPENDIX S.....63
APPENDIX T.....64
APPENDIX U.....65
APPENDIX V.....66
APPENDIX W.....67
APPENDIX X.....68
APPENDIX Y.....69
APPENDIX Z.....70
APPENDIX AA.....71
APPENDIX BB.....72
APPENDIX CC.....73
APPENDIX DD.....74

CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of the Problem

The targeted elementary school, as with other small, rural school systems, experienced a decrease in parental involvement. The intent of this research was to investigate a systematic approach for organizing parental involvement and to build community support for the school. Evidence for existence of the problem included declining membership in the Parent-Teacher Organization, elimination of the computer lab, limited library hours due to a lack of volunteers, elimination of the spring school carnival, and a lack of parental attendance at various classroom functions which included field trips.

Factors that contributed to this problem included a change in the structure of the American family (Epstein, 1995). There was an increase in the number of families where both parents worked outside the home. In addition, single-parent and blended families had become more prevalent in society. Another major contributor to this problem was the absence of mutual trust and respect between the school and parent communities. Lack of trust and respect hindered the educational opportunities available to children.

An issue of importance that compounded the lack of parent-teacher partnerships in the targeted school district was that teachers were on strike for 15 days in 1992. The time and work

for a small, rural community to recover from the effects of a strike were tremendous. A strike was nearly repeated during contract negotiations for the 1996-1997 school year. Although a strike was averted, emotions from the 1992 strike were experienced again within the community.

Local Setting

The school facility was a one story brick structure built in 1930. Renovations included adding four classrooms in 1970 with additional improvements occurring in 1980. These improvements provided handicap accessibility, increased the number of classrooms, and eliminated substandard areas of the school building. Fourteen rooms were available for classroom use, with 11 used for this purpose. The smaller rooms house speech and language services, Title 1 reading, and a conference area. A library was available for use by all students. The gymnasium doubled as the lunchroom facility.

The targeted elementary school had a total population of 223 students consisting of a Caucasian population of 97.3%, and a Hispanic population of 2.7%. The school was comprised of one class of all day, every day kindergarten and one section each of first through sixth grade. In grades kindergarten through sixth, class size averaged between 25 and 30 students. In addition to seven regular classrooms there were three sections of At-Risk Prekindergarten. There was also one section of Early Childhood Education, which was a special education program. The district's At-Risk and Early Childhood Education programs were housed at the targeted school.

The school employed 17 teachers to educate the student

population. The years of teaching experience ranged from 2 to 27 years. Within this group of 17 teachers three held a master's degree. Teachers with master's degrees included the elementary music teacher, Title 1 reading specialist, and an early childhood special education teacher.

The support staff at the elementary school was comprised of a full-time principal, who was also responsible for the school district's special education program. The school received services from a part-time school psychologist and a part-time school social worker whose time was divided among six attendance centers in the district. The six attendance centers were serviced by one full-time, licensed school nurse. The district employed one full-time instructional aide for the school, one half-time kindergarten aide, one aide in each of the At-Risk Prekindergarten classrooms, and one aide for the Early Childhood Education program. The office staff included one full-time building secretary and one half-time special education secretary. One full-time custodian and two part-time cooks comprised the support staff.

There was a wide variety of educational programs offered to elementary students in the school district. Federal and state programs included: Title 1 reading, gifted education, At-Risk Prekindergarten, and speech and language services. As a member of a regional special education district, the school received such services as occupational and physical therapy, assistance for the hearing-impaired, and facilities for student placement on other campuses. The school was selected to participate in the Global Learning Observation to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) program.

A federal program available to the students was an on-site hot lunch program.

Additional educational programs provided for the students consisted of: Reading Recovery offered to first grade students at risk of failing; Agriculture in the Classroom for second grade; nutrition education offered by the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service; Violence Education and Gang Awareness (VEGA); and Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE).

Students received fine arts and physical education instruction from specialists in art, music, and physical education. The school district made a commitment to technology with computer labs at the junior and senior high. Additionally, each third through sixth grade classroom had a minimum of five computers with intranet and internet access. Future plans included comparable technology for kindergarten through second grade. In total there were nine support programs available to the students at the elementary school.

Low-income families in the school comprised 9% of the total enrollment. There were no students with limited English proficiency in attendance. The attendance rate was 96.4%, with a chronic truancy rate of 1.6%. The school showed a student mobility rate of 9.4%.

The 1995-1996 Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) results for third graders at the school were: In reading 20% did not meet state goals, while 80% met or exceeded the state goals; in mathematics 8% did not meet the goals, while 92% met or exceeded the state goals; and in writing 17% did not meet the state goals, while 83% met or exceeded the state goals.

IGAP scores at the fourth grade level indicated that 7% did not meet the state goals for science, while 93% met or exceeded the state goals. In the area of social science, 14% did not meet the state goals, while 86% met or exceeded the state goals.

IGAP scores for the sixth grade students were: In reading 32% did not meet the state goals, while 68% met or exceeded the state goals; in mathematics 3% did not meet the goals, while 97% met or exceeded state goals; and in writing, 3% did not meet the state goals, while 97% met or exceeded the state goals.

The Community Setting

The school district was located in Rock Island County and incorporated five small communities. The district served a rural area of 170 square miles, and was bordered by three larger metropolitan communities.

The unit district office and the junior and senior high building were located geographically in the center of the district. The four elementary attendance centers contained kindergarten through sixth grade. These six attendance centers had a total of 185 employees, of which 103 were certified and 82 were classified.

The school district's population was 6,740. The breakdown of race within this population included 97.86% Caucasian, .83% African American, .45% American Indian, and .86% Hispanic.

The median household income in the school district was $35,989 as compared to $32,252 for the state of Illinois. Families living in poverty in this district accounted for 8.34% of the total population. The median housing value was $61,025 as compared to $80,114 for the state of Illinois.

The majority of the 1,480 students enrolled in the school district were transported to their attendance center via a school bus. The district's fleet of 25 buses ran an average of 40 miles per day, with an annual transportation budget of $607,150.

The school district operated on an annual budget comprised of local, state, and federal funds totaling $7,000,000. Local revenue totaled 45.24%, with the majority derived from local property taxes. State aid accounted for 52.32%, and federal aid 2.44% of the remaining revenue. Expenditure per student was $3,158, as compared to a state average of $4,320 per student. Instructional programs, and support services, constituted 89.52% of the annual operating budget.

A wide variety of extra-curricular activities were available for students. These activities included boys and girls athletics, drama, show choir, and an array of clubs and organizations.

Opportunities for parent involvement within the district included parent and teacher organizations, athletic and music boosters, post-prom sponsors, and the District Learning Leadership Team, made up of administrators, school board members, teachers, and community members.

The average graduation rate at the high school was 92.4%, of which 88.7% elected to attend post high school training. The average composite ACT was 21. Local scholarships totaling $52,000 annually were made available to the students through individual donations and trust funds.

Several issues continued to affect the school-community relationship. A failed referendum in April of 1988 forced one elementary building to be closed, which in turn caused drastic

personnel cuts. Many students were dispersed throughout the district and placed in classes of 30 or more. At that time all extra curricular programs were eliminated. The community responded by collecting $100,000 in one day which reinstated all extra-curricular activities in the district. These issues affected not only individual relationships within the community but also how the teachers and the community responded to each other.

The community passed a referendum in the fall of 1991. The teachers had previously agreed upon a salary freeze that year which showed the community their support to maintain programs in the district.

Six months later when teachers encountered difficulty with contract negotiations, the community failed to show their support. The end result was a lengthy and difficult strike that further divided the community. The memories of the previous 15 day strike resurfaced in the summer of 1996 when contract negotiations stalled. Two days prior to the beginning of the school year, a settlement was reached.

National Context of the Problem

The role of parents in the education of their children cannot be underestimated. By becoming involved in their school community, parents had the opportunity to become the link necessary to provide better educational opportunities for their children. The United States Department of Education, as stated in Goals 2000, has recognized the importance of parental involvement. Henderson and Berla (1994) indicated schools that promote partnerships usually will increase parental involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional, and academic growth of children.

Unless schools and teachers worked to develop partnership programs at each grade level, school and parent relations could decline. The student was at the center of the school-family partnership. Successful partnerships used activities that engaged, guided, energized, and motivated students.

When families were involved in their children's education in positive ways, there were many benefits: academic achievement rose, student behavior improved, students exhibited positive attitudes, dropout rates were lowered, and more children pursued post secondary education (Henderson & Berla,1994). As educators, it was necessary to provide the direction and opportunities to implement a successful parental involvement program. In order to establish the link between school and family, research had been conducted and analyzed to determine the reason for lack of parental involvement. Once the situation had been identified, strategies could be devised and implemented to encourage parents to participate in the child's school-related activities.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1974), educators hold with the belief that the informal education that took place in the home was a powerful prerequisite for success in school. In turn, parents needed to support the classroom teacher in efforts to improve student achievement. This could be attained by defining goals, expectations, and responsibilities.

The following ten insights, according to Sanders (1996), are useful in helping schools establish effective programs between school and home:

1. Partnerships are a shared responsibility.
2. Partnerships take time.
3. Partnerships reach out to all family members.
4. Partnerships improve incrementally.
5. Partnerships are important throughout the grades.
6. Partnerships need students.
7. Partnerships include the community.
8. Partnerships include the hard-to-reach.
9. Partnerships link to the curriculum and student learning.
10. Partnerships follow the six types of involvement (Sanders, 1996, p. 61-67).

According to Epstein (1995), the six types of involvement are: (1) parenting, (2) communicating, (3) volunteering, (4) learning at home, (5) decision making, and (6) collaborating with the community. These types of involvement are needed for improved parent-school relationships.

As research indicated, educators want to build strong school-family partnerships but have not yet achieved this goal. Developing good connections between home and school is an ongoing process that takes time, organization, and effort. Many educators are anticipating that by working together strong school-family partnerships can be built. An old African proverb states, "It takes an entire village to raise a child."

CHAPTER 2

PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

Problem Evidence

During the past several years the teachers of the targeted school noticed a decline in the number of parents involved in the education of children. Studies of individual families showed that what the family did was more important to student success than family income, education, or the child's grade level (Coleman, 1966; Keith & Keith, 1993). Results of a 1993 PTA/Newsweek national education survey stated that 40% of parents across the country believed that they did not devote enough time to their children's education (Finney, 1993).

The lack of active participation in the Parent-Teacher Organization was evident by the decline in attendance at the monthly business meetings. At these meetings, decisions were made which affected activities, projects, and programs for the students. An impact of this had been the elimination of the spring school carnival. The inability to generate volunteers to organize and help with this event caused its demise. This was unfortunate as the carnival was eagerly anticipated and well attended for many years.

Volunteers were the total support system for two significant programs at the school: the computer lab and the school library. Due to a lack of parent volunteers the computer lab was eliminated

in August, 1996. During the 1991-1992 school year the library was available to students five hours each day. During the 1996-1997 school year the library was closed one day a week with limited accessibility on the remaining days.

The lack of volunteers was further confirmed in each classroom by the absence of parent volunteers needed for various functions. Examples of activities that required parent help included: field trips, class parties, special art projects, educational units of study, reading aloud to students, and sharing career related information.

Probable Causes

Numerous underlying causes may have contributed to the lack of parental involvement at the school. One of these causes may have been the family structure. The school was comprised of 145 families. Of these, 122 or 84% were two-parent households. Thirty-eight or 26% had a blended family structure. Both parents worked outside the home in 95 or 66% of these households, leaving only 27 families or 19% with one parent working. Of the 23 single parent households, 21 or 91% worked outside the home, therefore they were not available to volunteer. In summary, only 26% of the households had a nonworking parent.

Another factor which may have contributed to the problem was apathetic parents and disgruntled teachers. As indicated in Chapter 1, the IGAP test scores showed that students met or exceeded the state goals at an average of 90%. Parents' perceptions of these test scores may have been that there were no problems in their child's education, therefore they were not needed. Some teachers and parents held a similar view that above

average achievement of the students did not necessitate a need for volunteer help. Therefore, opportunities had been overlooked to bridge the gap between home and school. Teachers had grown tired of asking for help. When parents had been asked to participate they were unresponsive and unreliable, which was perceived by the teachers as being apathetic.

The three week teacher strike in the fall 1992 resulted in negative, inaccurate stereotypes between school and family. Parents experienced turmoil, confusion, and anger, and were at a loss how to handle the situation. Teachers, on the other hand, felt betrayed by the parents due to a lack of trust and support. It was a difficult time for students, parents, teachers and the community. At the conclusion of the strike, parents, students, teachers, and community members were not given positive outlets for dealing with emotions. These unresolved feelings resurfaced in the fall of 1996 when another teacher strike was averted two days prior to the beginning of the school year.

The literature suggested several underlying causes for the lack of parental involvement. Aspects of modern life stood in the way of parents participating in their child's education. Time has been the biggest barrier to parental involvement. With the need for family members to hold more than one job, families had many demands on their time. Single parents and parents who were employed outside the home were less involved at the school, unless the school had opportunities organized for the families to volunteer (Epstein, 1995). Time was extremely limited for working parents who had to complete all household tasks. Sixty-six percent of employed parents say they did not have enough time for their

children's education (Families and Work Institute, 1994). Teachers were also pressed for time. Even though some would like to talk more with parents or make home visits, many teachers had family commitments.

Every school district was confronted with unique situations which affected parental involvement. When a district experienced a teacher strike, research indicated that within the public sector, there were parents who were angry, supportive, or willing to forget the strike. In a surveyed community after a similar strike, teachers responded that over 50% considered parents unsympathetic to their demands, and 32.8% considered parents anti-teacher and pro-school board (Radecki, 1980).

The strike was a bitter learning experience for the teachers and the community. There were no winners. The strike did not resolve any major issues, but created hostility among people who had previously enjoyed good parent-teacher relationships. The public's perception of the roles and performance of the teachers were affected. Negative repercussions from a strike can be long-term and potentially serious. According to Keough (1974), one way to address these adverse feelings was to launch a community and teacher involvement program.

Another issue addressed in the research was that many parents did not do well in school themselves, and were therefore reluctant to get involved. Parents felt intimidated and were unwilling to contribute due to a lack of success in school. Certain parents believed that they were paying taxes or tuition to have children educated. This responsibility was to be assumed by the school and the teacher. Yet many parents would be willing to spend more time

on homework or other learning activities if teachers gave more guidance (Henderson, Marburger, Ooms, 1986).

Walker stated that schools and families remained disconnected. Parents did not feel welcome at school, and educators failed to put out the welcome mat. Usually, the first time a parent was contacted by the school a child was in trouble. Parents felt more comfortable with the school environment when the initial contact was positive and friendly. According to numerous researchers, examples of positive contacts were: telephone calls within the first two weeks of school as an initial communication with each parent, written communications, open house held early in the school year as a welcome activity, and distribution of the "Parent Involvement Pledge." When parents were involved and welcomed in the school, the children's learning was more effective. If collaborative partnerships were formed between home and school, children would achieve at higher levels, and schools would become more effective climates for learning (Walker, 1997).

"I never knew I was needed until you called," was an often-heard statement from parents regarding involvement in a child's school (Flood & Lapp,1995). Educators needed to realize that parent involvement was more than fund-raising for the school. In some instances, teachers neglected to elicit help from the parents. Reasons for this included feelings of criticism, disruption, and intimidation by the presence of parents in the classroom. These concerns needed to be addressed in order to bridge the gap successfully between home and school (Epstein, 1985).

CHAPTER 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Literature Review

Upon review of the literature, three specific areas of parental involvement were targeted as the major focus of the solutions strategy: communicating, volunteering, and learning. According to Gordon (1979), the more comprehensive and long lasting the parental involvement, in all areas, the more effective it is likely to be. The effects of involved parents were evident in the quality of schools as institutions serving the community.

The first focus of parental involvement was to design more effective forms of school-to-home and home-to-school contact with all families concerning school programs and the child's progress. Researchers suggested establishing a climate of approachability, respect, and open communication as essential. Communication would be a two-way street where both parents and teachers felt comfortable with each other. A communication plan must be developed to reach all parents in order to maximize learning. Both home and school had an affect on a child's academic performance. With the child as the family-school connection, any program designed to enhance home-school partnerships would show improved classroom success (Rosenthal & Sawyers,1996). In today's society, the importance of the interaction between formal and informal

education was not recognized or valued. Children live in both worlds, moving back and forth at the beginning and end of each school day. Parents and teachers must strive toward the mutual goal of educating the child (Gordon, 1979).

A variety of techniques should be used to improve home-school communication. Specific types of communications included: student-parent handbook, a monthly school newsletter, written communication between teacher and parent, positive and periodic telephone calls, and parent-teacher conferences as needed (Hester, 1989). A friendly school climate should be established to achieve maximum rapport between the school and community. Epstein (1987) cited several ways to involve parents in learning activities at home. The following six methods could be used to increase home-school communication:

1. Loan books, workbooks, and other materials to parents.
2. Ask parents and children to talk about school activities.
3. Give an assignment that requires the student to ask their parents questions.
4. Send home suggestions for games or group activities.
5. Ask parents to sign homework.
6. Give a questionnaire to parents so they can evaluate their child's progress.

According to Flood & Lapp (1995) and other experts, teachers often wonder how to initiate communication with parents. Introductory contacts with parents could include a written invitation, a home visit, or a friendly phone call. Researchers

suggested that the first contact should be non-threatening and pleasant, encouraging parents to return to the school.

Epstein (1995) suggested that schools could be more effective in encouraging parental involvement. Communications from school to home were often considered by teachers and administrators to be a form of parent involvement. However, this type of communication consisted of school schedules, procedures, and policies. While these types of communications were necessary, a means of soliciting feedback from the parents was not provided. To implement proper communication, surveys and questionnaires between parents and staff needed to be ongoing to ensure effectiveness.

Researchers have stated when parents felt good about the school they were more likely to feel comfortable taking a positive and active role in their child's education, therefore, asking for suggestions, and responding to the needs of the child and school. When positive communication occurred, teachers and parents were a major force affecting a child's learning (Neilsen & Finkelstein, 1993).

The second targeted area to improve parental involvement was volunteering. Certain systematic procedures needed to be followed in organizing and recruiting parent volunteers to take an active role in the child's education. Upon completion of a survey by teachers, the needs for organizing parental involvement could be assessed.

Walker (1997) suggested the use of a parental involvement pledge. Such a pledge declared responsibility and commitment by the parents to the child's school. All parents were requested to sign the pledge. The intent of such a pledge was to develop a

positive partnership between school and family.

Many parents had a misconception that volunteering needed to take place during the regular school day. According to Kimball (1996), there were times when this was not possible. Family responsibilities, physical limitations, appointments, or work schedules prevented adults from volunteering at the school. Such factors should not limit the ability to volunteer. Parents could help almost anytime, day or night, by doing work for the school while at home.

According to Walker (1997) an interest inventory for volunteers must be included with a parental involvement pledge. A list of possible volunteer activities allowed parents to choose an area of interest. Possible activities included working with a student, helping in the computer center, preparing materials, helping with special projects, working in the school library, or making telephone calls. A parental involvement pledge was the primary vehicle in which parental involvement could be measured and organized. The pledge served as a key mechanism to track parent involvement (Walker, 1997). Careful record keeping and coordinating parent involvement were tools to measure the success of the program. To organize parent volunteers, a team of parents, teachers, administrators, and community members was needed to coordinate the program. Parents' concern for their children has created a need for organized coordinators to ensure a successful working relationship within the volunteer program (Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986).

The final component of the parental involvement plan was learning. Families needed to be provided with information and

ideas about how to help students with activities related to the curriculum. Parental involvement in the 90's had broadened to include adult education classes (Clark, 1995). Evening opportunities needed to be made available to families in order to allow them greater involvement. Lueder (1989) suggested the use of family nights which can create a positive learning environment where parents and children can work together as a team, using a "hands-on" approach to learning. Such evening events were learning tools for parents, students and teachers and allow parents greater confidence when assisting with homework.

Researchers indicated that less than half of all parents helped children with homework each day, and only 47% of those with young children read to them daily (Finney, 1993). Among students aged 10 to 13, 72% would like to talk to parents more about schoolwork (National Commission on Children, 1991). According to the Center for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1986), homework was a form of parent involvement that did not require parents to come to school. However, parents needed guidance in this area in order to assist the child's learning. Documented research indicated homework activities were closely related to higher achievement by students. School and parent partnerships geared toward improving the learning environment in the home had a greater chance for success in promoting achievement. Walberg's (1984) research stated that teachers who use homework activities were usually able to involve parents from all educational backgrounds. Researchers indicated that assignments done at home had a positive result regardless of socioeconomic status (Walker, 1987).

Shore (1994) suggested the use of dialogue journals to communicate with parents. Such journals were used to converse with parents to accelerate learning through the homework process. "Homework without feedback is of little value" (p.163).

Another aspect of learning was parent-teacher conferences. Rosenthal & Sawyers (1996) stated that conferences provided a learning opportunity in which student goals were established. The teacher, parent, and child worked to define goals that would be accomplished by the student during the school year.

According to Neilsen & Finkelstein (1993), the rationale for parent-teacher conferences was as follows:

> The parent-teacher conference provides an opportunity for connection. Goals for the parent-teacher conference can include the exchange of feelings, beliefs and knowledge between parent and teacher about a particular student. This exchange should facilitate cooperation between home and school for the benefit of the student. Since the parent-teacher conference is often the sole contact between parents and teachers, it presents the primary opportunity to facilitate this cooperation. Consequently, what happens during this time is critical. (p.91)

As the researchers pointed out, there were many opportunities for parent involvement programs and contacts between home and school. While designs vary, all programs included similarities which enhanced learning. "Rather than as a peripheral 'extra' or optional activity, work with parents should be viewed as an integral part of the way schools and services function" (Jowett & Baginsky, 1991, p. 202). Parent involvement should be given high

priority as an essential and effective way to meet the needs of children. Such programs could not be left to chance, but needed planning, organization, direction, and good implementation. Parents, teachers, administrators, and community members must become a working team to maximize a child's potential. Quality parent involvement programs improved the lives of children, families, and the quality of the community as a whole (Brock, 1991).

As a result of the research, the targeted school focused on communicating, learning, and volunteering. These objectives were accomplished through take-home activities, family nights, and volunteer committees.

Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of implementing a more effective form of school-to-home and home-to-school communication with parents, during the period of September 1997 through February 1998 the parents and teachers will increase communication as measured by the number of parents who sign the parent involvement pledge, number of parents who attend conferences, and parent/child responses to take-home activities.

In order to accomplish this objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Distribute parent pledge.
2. Utilize homework and reading pacts.
3. Develop a student goal in partnership with parent, teacher, and student.

As a result of recruiting and organizing parent help, during the period of September 1997 through February 1998 the parents at the targeted elementary school will increase their level of involvement, as measured by the number of volunteer hours and number of parents participating.

In order to accomplish this objective the following processes are necessary:

1. Survey teachers about opportunities for parental involvement.
2. Distribute a volunteer interest inventory to all families.
3. Make available a list of activities allowing parents to volunteer.

As a result of providing information and ideas to families at math and reading night about how to help students at home with homework and other curricular-related activities, during the period of September 1997 through February 1998 the staff will increase opportunities for parent and child learning, as measured by attendance at various learning functions, parent surveys, and student reflections.

In order to accomplish this objective the following processes are necessary:

1. Implement a Parent University Night.
2. Implement a Family Reading Night.
3. Implement a Family Math Night.

ACTION PLAN FOR PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The action plan focused on three areas of parental involvement: communicating, volunteering, and learning. The following grade levels at the school were targeted: kindergarten, first grade, second grade, and fourth grade. A number of activities included the entire school, with a Parent University Night being district-wide. Prior to August, a grant application requesting funds for parent involvement activities was filed with the Regional Office of Education. This schedule covered the months from August 1997 through February 1998. Because of time

constraints, additional activities could be conducted in March and April 1998 including a Parent Volunteer Recognition Program.

AUGUST

I. Communicating

A. August 6 - Registration/Parent University information distributed

B. August 11 - Mailed student welcome postcards

SEPTEMBER

I. Communicating

A. September 2-4 - Media blitz on parent involvement for the school

B. September 5 - Sent home The Parental Pledge

C. September 10 - Journal entry - students wrote down one thing they wanted to share with parents about the classroom at Open House

D. September 11 - Open House - restructured for purpose of improved communication with families

Targeted population: 75% of households represented

Follow-up: Surveyed parents and staff regarding reaction to new open house format

E. District-wide distribution of Parent University fliers

II. VOLUNTEERING

A. September 5 - Sent home Inventory of Volunteer Interests

Follow-up: September 24 - Organized volunteer committee

III. LEARNING

A. Initiated the use of student homework and reading pacts

OCTOBER

I. COMMUNICATING

A. Distributed Parent University Night information

II. VOLUNTEERING

A. Continued to organize and utilize parent volunteers

B. Tabulated data regarding specific parental involvement

III. LEARNING

A. Continued the use of homework and reading pacts within individual classrooms

B. October 22 - District-wide Parent University Night

Targeted population: 20% of households represented

Follow-up: Parent survey

NOVEMBER

I. COMMUNICATING

A. Distributed information about Family Reading Night

B. November 6-7 - Parent/teacher conferences
Follow-up: Parent questionnaire on conferences

II. VOLUNTEERING

A. Continued to organize and utilize parent volunteers
Follow-up: Continued to tabulate data regarding specific parental involvement

III. LEARNING

A. Continued the use of homework and reading pacts within individual classrooms

B. November 20 - Family Reading Night at the school
Targeted population: 50% of households represented
Follow-up: Parents surveyed and student PMI

DECEMBER

I. COMMUNICATING

A. December 10 - Student PMI sent home to parents about the classroom

II. VOLUNTEERING

A. Continued to organize and utilize parent volunteers
Follow-up: Continued to tabulate data regarding specific parental involvement

III. LEARNING

A. Continued the use of homework and reading pacts within individual classrooms

JANUARY

I. COMMUNICATING

A. Distributed information about Family Math Night

II. VOLUNTEERING

A. Continued to organize and utilize parent volunteers

Follow-up: Continued to tabulate data regarding specific parental involvement

III. LEARNING

A. Continued the use of homework and reading pacts with individual classrooms

B. January 28 - Family Math Night at the school

Targeted population: 50% of households

Follow-up: Favorite activity tally graph from targeted classrooms

FEBRUARY

I. COMMUNICATING

A. With the use of a rubric parents rated the success of take-home activities

II. VOLUNTEERING

A. Continued to organize and utilize parent volunteers

Targeted population: 25% of households represented

Follow-up: Final tabulation of data regarding specific parental involvement

B. Individual members of the base group constructed a PMI on the success of the parental involvement action plan

III. LEARNING

A. Continued the use of homework within individual classrooms

B. Continued the use of reading pacts within the individual classrooms

Additional activities for April included Volunteer Appreciation and Recognition Night.

The success of the Action Research Project was determined by the number of parents who volunteered at the school and by the attendance at the special evening activities. The aim of implementing this action plan is to improve the school climate and strengthen relationships within the parent community.

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the interventions regarding the parent involvement plan presented, surveys, rubrics, and questionnaires were developed. Charts were included documenting the initial response to the parent pledge and the actual fulfillment of the volunteer commitment. Attendance had been

recorded at parent involvement activities. In addition, action plan activities had been assessed through student responses and journaling.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of the Intervention

The targeted school experienced a decrease in parental involvement. Evidence for the existence of the problem included declining membership in the Parent-Teacher Organization, dismantling of the computer lab, limited library hours due to a lack of volunteers, elimination of the spring school carnival, and a lack of parental attendance at various classroom functions and field trips.

The focus of this project was on communicating, volunteering, and learning as related to parental involvement. The objectives were to implement a more effective form of school-to-home and home-to-school communication with parents, to increase the level of parental involvement, and to disseminate information to families concerning homework and other activities related to the curriculum. The implementation of volunteer commitments, family nights, and take-home activities were selected to effect the desired changes. These interventions were implemented between August 1997 and February 1998.

Parents were greeted at school registration with a banner stating: "Parents are Important Partners! Sign the Pledge!" A photograph can be found in Appendix A. No other information about the Pledge was given to the parents at this time. The staff was inserviced at the teachers' meeting prior to the beginning of the school year. At this meeting copies of the pledge along with an example of the interest inventory were distributed to

interested teachers. A sample of the pledge can be found in Appendix B and an interest inventory example in Appendix C. The pledge, complete with a cover letter and interest inventory was distributed to the students to take home on August 29, 1997. An example of the cover letter is in Appendix D. Signed pledges and interest inventories were returned by September 5, 1997. Pledges were then displayed in the school's hallways. Each classroom teacher was responsible for tabulating, organizing, and utilizing the results of the returned interest inventories. A local newspaper was contacted. Subsequently, photos were taken and an article was written regarding the pledge and the targeted schools commitment to parental involvement. A sample of photograph and article can be found in Appendix E.

A committee was formed at the targeted elementary school to restructure open house which was held on September 11, 1997. The purpose of restructuring was to improve communication with families. The committee was comprised of the action research team along with the principal and two additional classroom teachers. This decision was that the new format would consist of two 20 minute parent-teacher informative sessions, followed by a 20 minute parent-child classroom visit. At the conclusion of the sessions the Parents Club hosted refreshments and a book fair. An example of open house agenda can be found in Appendix F. A survey was distributed to all parents in attendance evaluating the new open house format. See sample of survey in Appendix G. Staff members were interviewed to obtain feedback to be used for planning future open houses.

Preliminary steps were initiated in February 1997 concerning

the possibility of hosting a district-wide Parent University Night. An eight member steering committee was comprised of two administrators and six teachers, four of which were action research team members. Work commenced immediately securing a date, location, and speakers. Monthly working sessions involving the entire committee were held prior to the event. Information was distributed through school registrations, open houses, local newspapers, and the district's newsletter. See example of Parent University flyer in Appendix H and newspaper article in Appendix I. In addition to these written communications, announcements were also made on various television and radio community calendars. Sample of announcement can be found in Appendix J.

The district hosted its first Parent University Night on October 22, 1998. The evening was comprised of two sessions covering a total of 18 different topics of interest. Twelve organizations displayed informational exhibits, and refreshments were served. An example of the Parent University Night booklet can be found in Appendix K. At the conclusion of each session, a brief survey was distributed to those in attendance. See sample of survey in Appendix L.

Parent-Teacher conferences were held Thursday and Friday, November sixth and seventh, 1997. In order to meet the needs of working parents, conferences were scheduled on November sixth from 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and on November seventh, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Sessions were 15 minutes in length.

In June 1997 the action research team wrote a Title 1 grant application for funds designated to promote parental involvement in the targeted elementary school. These funds were to be used to

provide materials and supplies for a Family Reading Night and Family Math Night. See sample of grant application in Appendix M.

In conjunction with Illinois' Reading Week, the targeted school hosted an evening of reading activities on November 20, 1997. An invitation announcing this special event was distributed in each child's report card, and a flyer was sent home the following week with each student. Sample invitation in Appendix N and flyer in Appendix O. Each student wrote and mailed a postcard inviting the family to Family Reading Night. An example of postcard can be found in Appendix P.

The evening consisted of a professional storyteller, reading activities in each classroom, a Reading is Fundamental free book distribution, and refreshments. Parent surveys were distributed at the end of the evening, and student reflections were recorded by the targeted classroom teachers the following day. See sample of survey in Appendix Q.

Early in January the targeted school's staff worked in cooperation with the action research team to plan activities for Family Math Night to be held January 28, 1998. Each teacher was responsible for planning an activity. Supplies were purchased as requested. Informational flyers were sent home during the month of January. Example of flyer in Appendix R.

The opening activity consisted of six estimating stations held in the gym. Following these activities an explanation of the evening's itinerary was given, and a Family Math Night menu was distributed. A sample of the menu can be found in Appendix S. At the conclusion of the classroom math activities, families were invited back to the gym for the announcement of the estimation

winners and refreshments. Surveys were also collected at this time. See example of survey in Appendix T.

A conscious effort was made to connect the home and school through various take-home learning activities. The frequency and type of activities varied according to grade level and teacher interest. Some examples of work to be completed at home were: a math activity, a literature log, a weekly spelling activity sheet, and a homework log. A sample of the math activity can be found in Appendix U, the literature log in Appendix V, the weekly spelling activity sheet in Appendix W, and the homework log in Appendix X. In addition to take-home learning activities, parents were kept informed of daily highlights, classroom projects, and special events through weekly newsletters. See samples of newsletters in Appendices Y and Z.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to encourage parent involvement, a parent pledge was sent home with each student at the beginning of the school year. These data were aggregated by four of the five participating classrooms and are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Parent Pledge Results by Grade Level

Grade	Number of Students	Number of Pledges Returned	Number Fulfilling Two Hour Commitment
Kindergarten	22	15	10
First	19	14	10
Second	27	22	16
Fourth	26	20	17

Parents who fulfilled the volunteer commitment in the kindergarten classroom totaled 10, which was 66% of those who signed the pledge. A variety of tasks were completed by the volunteers, which included helping with centers, providing playdough, and accompanying the class on field trips.

In first grade parents were involved with various activities which included listening to children read, cutting out monthly name tags, helping in the computer center, and working on special art projects. Seventy-one percent, or a total of 10 parents who had signed the Pledge, fulfilled the volunteer commitment in the first grade classroom.

Parents who fulfilled the volunteer commitment in the second grade classroom totaled 16, which was 72% of those who signed the Pledge. To fulfill the volunteer commitment, parents performed a variety of tasks, including helping with art centers, reading to students, and providing special treats.

In fourth grade, parents chose to volunteer from a plethora of activities, such as cleaning desk tops, displaying work in the hallways, working in the school library, and assisting with computer centers. A total of 17 parents who signed the Pledge, or 85%, fulfilled the volunteer commitment in the fourth grade classroom.

Open House at the targeted school had traditionally been well attended and had consisted of an informal open classroom visit. Prior to the 1997 Open House, parents were made aware of a change in format which allowed them a chance to hear about classroom procedures. The families that attended from the targeted classrooms totaled 87%. Of the 62 people who responded to the

survey, on a scale of one to five, with five being the most positive, 58 respondents gave the Open House a rating of five. When asked if the session with the child's teacher was informative, 99% surveyed indicated yes. Concluding the survey, 99% stated that the new format should be continued in the future.

Parent University Night was the first event of its kind to bring together all attendance centers in the district for the purpose of providing points of interest and addressing the challenges of parenting. Data indicating attendance by schools are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Parent University Attendance

Attendance Center	Number in Attendance
Targeted Elementary School	32
Elementary School A	5
Elementary School B	10
Elementary School C	7
Junior High School D	15
Senior High School E	41
Other	14

The targeted school's attendance was higher than the three other elementary schools combined. According to the surveys returned, 67 would attend a future Parent University Night, nine volunteered to serve on a future planning committee, and two people would present a topic of interest. There was an even distribution of attendance at all grade levels, prekindergarten

through twelfth grade. There were two sessions with nine different topics offered each time. The attendance ranged from four to 19 people per topic.

The public was informed of the Parent University Night through a variety of sources as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Sources of Communication About Parent University Night

Communication Source	Number Informed
The District Newsletter	38
School Newsletter	30
School Registration	10
Newspaper	2
Radio	1
Television	1
Other	29

Respondents were asked to indicate on the survey ways in which Parent University Night information was communicated to the households. Attendees listed other means of communication as friends, Parent University committee, school staff, parent-teacher organizations, and open houses.

Parent-Teacher conferences have been well attended in the past due to the flexibility in scheduling by the staff. Attendance at conferences for the targeted classrooms was as follows: kindergarten-100%, first grade-100%, second grade-96%, and fourth grade-92%. Parents were surveyed as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of the conferences. According to the survey, the

conference session was informative and helped parents understand the educational progress of the child. Seventy-three of the respondents stated that this was not the first contact with the teacher. Parent survey results can be found in Appendix AA.

The teachers at the targeted school were also surveyed. When asked if students should attend school on conference days, 100% responded that students should not be in attendance on either day. All of the teachers agreed that the conferences were very helpful. See teacher survey results in Appendix BB.

As part of the action plan for parental involvement, a Family Reading Night was held on Thursday, November 20, 1997. The targeted attendance for the event was 50% of the households. This goal was not met with a total of 48% of families in attendance. The breakdown of student attendance by grade level is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Family Reading Night Attendance by Grade Level

Grade	Number of Students	Number in Attendance
Prekindergarten	45	14
Kindergarten	22	18
First	20	12
Second	27	21
Third	27	14
Fourth	26	21
Fifth	27	14
Sixth	29	8

The number of students in attendance was 122, which was 54% of the total number of students enrolled. Researchers found higher attendance in the targeted classrooms. Parents were encouraged to complete a Family Reading Night survey. The results indicated that families enjoyed the storyteller, classroom activities, RIF book distribution, and would attend another Family Reading Night in the future. Student reflections were recorded the following day in the targeted classrooms. An example of a first grade reflection can be found in Appendix CC.

Another opportunity to involve parents in a positive learning environment was a Family Math Night on January 28, 1998. The targeted attendance for the event was 50% of the households. With 30% of the households represented, this goal was not met. The breakdown of student attendance by grade level is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Family Math Night Attendance by Grade Level

Grade	Number of Students	Number in Attendance
Kindergarten	22	10
First	20	12
Second	27	17
Third	27	8
Fourth	26	11
Fifth	27	5
Sixth	29	7

The number of students in attendance was 70, which was 30% of

the total number students enrolled. Researchers found higher attendance in the targeted classrooms. Information gathered from the Family Math Night surveys showed that families enjoyed the estimating stations in the gym, various classroom activities, and would attend a future Family Math Night. The children in the targeted classrooms responded the following day about a favorite math activity from the previous night. See math activity graph in Appendix DD.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of implementing this action plan was to improve the school climate and strengthen relationships within the parent community. Based on the presentation and analysis of the data, parents responded in a positive way when specific opportunities for communicating, volunteering, and learning were provided.

During this time a concentrated effort was made to increase communication. Several new approaches were implemented to make positive contact between school and home. The following communication strategies worked well for the targeted classrooms: Welcome to Class! postcards, weekly newsletters, and positive telephone calls home throughout the semester. The benefits of the increased communications were recognized during the first semester by the entire staff. Awareness of the effects of positive communications led the targeted school's staff to develop and implement a Student of the Week program for the second semester. This weekly program recognized one student in each classroom who exemplified good behavior. The student was awarded with a positive telephone call home and a certificate of recognition. Increased

communication in the targeted classrooms had a positive effect throughout the school.

Through the distribution of the pledge and interest inventory more parent volunteer hours were utilized than ever before. Due to additional parent volunteers the library hours have been expanded, and additional classroom projects have been incorporated into the curriculum.

Researchers found that to utilize volunteers, a parent coordinator is needed for the entire building. Time restraints and lack of telephoning opportunities limited the classroom teacher's ability to organize needed help. The action research team concluded that parent volunteers could have been used even more effectively if the total responsibility was not left to the classroom teacher.

The final focus of this research was to encourage families to return to the school for an evening of learning. Open house provided the first opportunity and was endorsed by the staff as being very successful. The recommendation would be to continue with the revised format.

The district's first Parent University Night was well received by those in attendance. Preparations for this event commenced ten months prior to the scheduled date. Positive comments were not only limited to people in attendance but also included presenters and exhibitors.

A goal of the district was to improve community involvement. Parent University Night was an avenue which achieved this goal. All attendance centers were represented by members of the committee. The researchers reflected that there was not district

wide staff support for this event.

A recommendation for a future Parent University Night, or an event of this magnitude would require a committee that included community members as well as school staff. A source of funding will need to be established to cover the cost of hosting such an event.

Family Reading and Math Nights provided wonderful opportunities for parents and children to explore learning activities together. Parents and children reflected that both evenings were enjoyable and would look forward to future family nights at the school. For a program of this type to be successful, total support of the entire staff is needed.

The recommendation was to continue hosting two family nights at the school each year. A suggestion was made by another staff member that family learning nights be rotated according to subject matter.

In conclusion, the action research team investigated a systematic approach for organizing parental involvement and building community support for the school. This was accomplished by increasing communication, implementing a volunteer program, and providing family learning opportunities. Due to the commitment of the action research team, along with additional support from school staff and parents, this project was successful. In summation, "Parents are Important Partners in Education."

REFERENCES

Brock, S. (1991). Achievement and enrollment evaluation of the early childhood development program, 1990-1991. (ERIC Documentation Reproduction Service No. ED 345-861)

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1974).A report on longitudinal evaluations of preschool programs, Vol. II: Is early intervention effective? Washington, DC: Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Office of Child Development. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 093 501)

Clark, C. (1995). Gaining support for involvement ranges from education secretary to Riley to the PTA to Project Appleseed. Congressional Quarterly, 5(3), 49-72.

Coleman, J.S. (1966). Equality of educational opportunity. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.

Epstein, J.L. (1985). Parents' reactions to teacher practices of parent involvement. Elementary School Journal, 86(1), 277-294.

Epstein, J.L. (1987, January). What principals should know about parent involvement. Principal, pp.6-9.

Epstein, J.L. (1995). School/family/community partnerships: Caring for the children we share. Phi Delta Kappan, 76(9), 701-712.

Families and Work Institute. (1994) Employers, families, and education: Facilitating family involvement in learning. New York: Author.

Finney, P. (1993, May 17). The PTS/Newsweek national education survey. Newsweek, pp.10-14.

Flood, J., & Lapp, D. (1995). "I never knew I was needed until you called!": Promoting parent involvement in schools. The Reading Teacher, 48(7), 614-617.

Gordon, I. (1979). The effects of parent involvement on schooling. In R. Brandt (Ed.), Partners: parents and schools (pp. 70-74). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Henderson, A.T., & Berla, N. (1994). A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement. Washington, DC: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, A.T., Marburger, C.L., & Ooms, T. (1986). Beyond the bake sale: An educator's guide to working with parents. Columbia, MD: NationalCommittee for Citizens in Education.

Hester, H. (1989, January). Start at home to improve home-school relations. NASSP Bulletin, 73(513), 23-27.

Jowett, S., & Baginsky, M. (1988). Parents and education: A survey of their involvement and a discussion of some issues. Educational Research, 30(1), 36-45.

Keith, T.Z., & Keith, P.B. (1993). Does parental involvement affect eighth-grade student achievement? Structural analysis of national data. School Psychology Review, 22(3), 474-496.

Keough, W. (1974, February). Fence Mending After the Strike. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Association of School Administrators, Atlantic City, NJ.

Kimball, M.M., & Segal, E. (1991). For reading out loud!. New York: Dell.

Leuder, D.C. (1989). Tennessee parents were invited to participate-and they did. Educational Leadership, 47(2), 15-17.

National Commission on Children. (1991). Speaking of kids: A national survey of children and parents. Washington, DC: Author.

Neilsen, L.E., & Finkelstein, J.M. (1993). A new approach to parent conferences. Teaching K-8, 24(1), 90-92.

Radecki, H., & Evans, S. (1980). The teachers' strike study. Toronto, Ontario: Ontario Department of Education.

Rosenthal, D.M., & Sawyers, J.Y. (1996). Building successful home/school partnerships: Strategies for parent support and involvement. Journal of the Association for Childhood Education International, 72(4), 194-200.

Sanders, G. (1996). Building family partnerships that last. Educational Leadership, 54(3), 61-66.

Shore, K. (1994). The parents' public school handbook: How to make the most of your child's education, from kindergarten through middle school. New York, NY: Fireside.

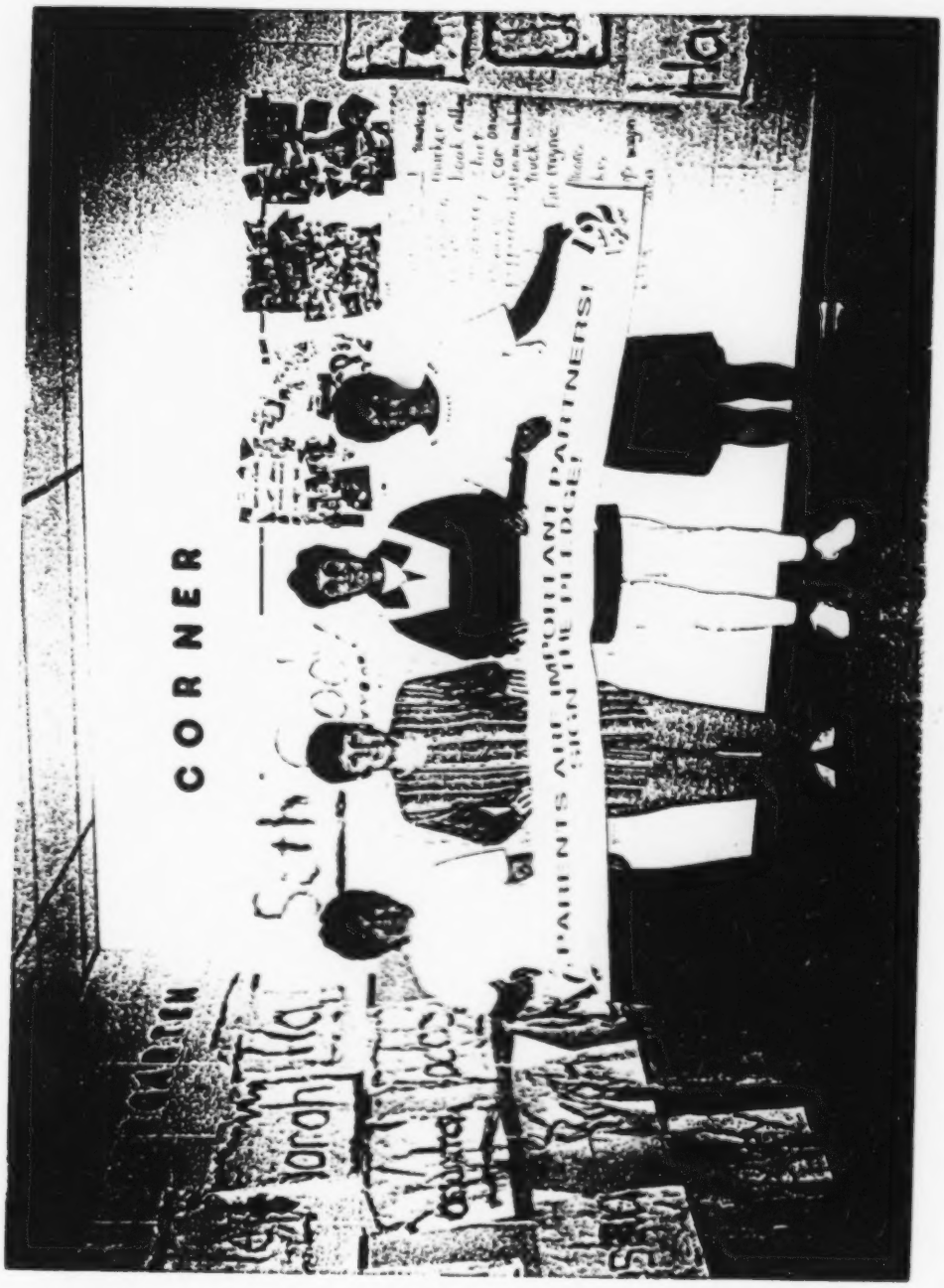
U.S. Department of Education (1986). Center for Education Statistics, Office of Educational Research and Improvement. The Condition of Education, A Statistical Report. Washington, DC.

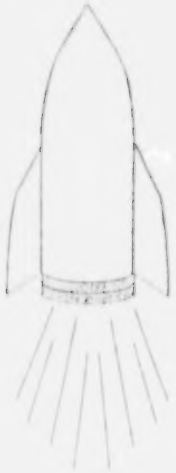
Walberg, H.J. (1984). Families as partners in educational productivity. Phi Delta Kappan, 51(4), 397-400.

Walker, K. (1997). Project Appleseed: The national campaign for public school improvement. St. Louis, MO.

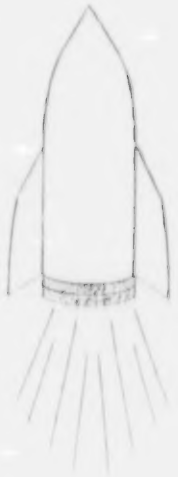
Appendices

Appendix A
Picture of Banner





Andalusia Elementary School Parent Involvement Pledge



I Pledge to take personal responsibility for my child's education.

I can volunteer a minimum of two hours each semester.

Parent signature

Appendix C
Interest Inventory

Inventory of Volunteer Interests

You may be able to volunteer in ways that you have not considered. The following lists some of the possibilities. You can volunteer for one or more of the tasks below by checking the box. Please return the signed Pledge along with this inventory to your child's teacher. Thank you!

I am interested in volunteering

☐ During School ☐ Evenings ☐ Weekend

I'd like to:

☐ Work in the Library
☐ Telephone parents

Appear as a guest speaker:

☐ Share travels
☐ Share hobbies
☐ Share about my career
☐ Share a skill or craft

Work in Classroom:

☐ Read to class
☐ Listen to students read
☐ Clean student desk tops
☐ Help in computer center
☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____

Special Unit Projects:

☐ _____
☐ _____
☐ _____

Parent Choice

☐ _____

Name _____

E-mail address _____ Phone Number _____

Appendix D
Cover Letter

August 29, 1997

Dear Parents,

Let's make this year the best ever at Andalusia Elementary School! You can help by signing the attached Parent Involvement Pledge. Along with the pledge is a list of possible ways you can help your child's class. Please return the completed forms by Friday, September 5. Thank you for your interest and desire in making our school the best!!!

Looking Forward
to a GREAT Year!

Mrs. Aten
Mrs. McGonigle
Mrs. Mueller
Mrs. New
Mrs. Peschang

Appendix E
Newspaper Article

Area Business
See page C8

People

New Boston Fish Fry, Parade
See pa

Andalusia parents going back to school for their child

MARY SPIEGEL

Debbie Mueller a teacher at Andalusia grade school explained that "New Parents Partnership" is a pledge by each parent of a grade school student to give two hours to the classroom each semester, or as some the parents are working, they can donate in other ways. Two of the parents are helping by working on the weekend making playdough for the students.

Debbie said that this is a "for teachers" organized effort as part of a masters degree program. The partnership program is part of the Goals 2000 Education America Act set out by the National Education Association. The governors and the President met and set up six goals. US Congress added two new goals.

The goals state that by the year 2000: (1) All children in America will start school ready to learn. (2) The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent. (3) All students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter including English, Mathematics, Science, Foreign Languages, Civics and Government, Economics, Arts, History, and Geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our Nation's modern economy. (4) The Nation's teaching force will have access to programs for the continued improvement of their professional skills and the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to instruct and prepare all American students for the next century. (5) United States students will be first in the world in mathematics and science achievement. (6) Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. (7) Every school

Students of Andalusia Grade School are displaying the pledges that their parents have signed to donate time to the school and to their sons and daughters. Pictured L-R: Rachel Vroman, first grade; Haley Fletcher, fourth grade; Regina Paok, second grade; Caleb Buser, third grade; and Tia Fuhr, Kindergarten. *Photo by Mary Spiegel*

Chris Flaherty, mother of Zack Flaherty, is fulfilling her pledge by donating h the kindergarten class by helping them with the computers. Pictured L-R: Za Tyler Kelly, Erin Ehmen, Chelsey Fite, and Jake Fuhr with Chis Flaherty. *Mary Spiegel*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix F
Open House Agenda

ANDALUSIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 50
Open House - September 11

Dear Parents:

We cordially invite you and the children to attend our Open House on September 11. We are very excited about the new format and hope you'll enjoy the evening!

Please review the procedures and schedule of events below:

DATE: September 11
TIME: 6:30-8:30 PM

6:30-6:50	Parent-Teacher session I (classroom)
6:55-7:15	Repeat of session I (classroom)
Note:	Both sessions will cover the same information.
7:20-7:40	Classroom visits with the children

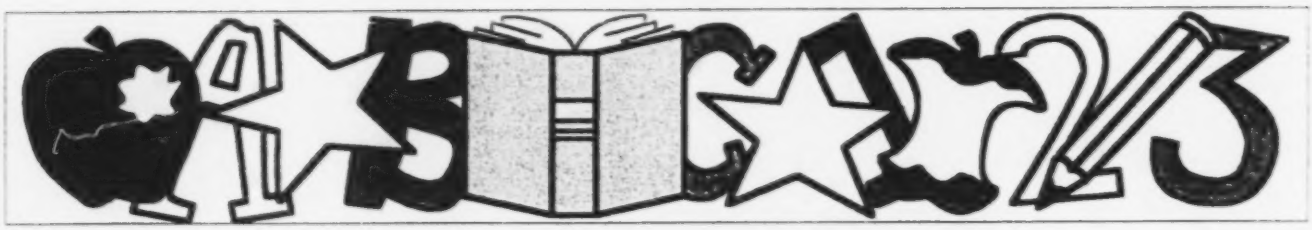
The purpose of the classroom sessions are to acquaint you with the curriculum, classroom procedures, student expectations, etc. We feel this time without the children will allow the opportunity for questions, etc.

6:30-7:15	Students in attendance at school will be supervised by the teacher aides. Pre-school age children will be the responsibility of their parents.
NOTE:	Ringing of the bell at 6:50,7:15,7:40 will signal the changing of sessions.
7:40-8:15	Refreshments in the gym
7:40-8:30	Library - Book Fair Sales

We are looking forward to spending this evening with you and the children. Please mark your calendar!

George Castro
Principal

Appendix G
Open House Survey



OPEN HOUSE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Please rate on a scale of 1 to 5 the new format we followed this year for Open House with 5 being the most positive rating to 1 - didn't like.

5 4 3 2 1

2. Was the session with your child's teacher informative?

yes somewhat no

3. Should we continue this format next year?

yes no

Comments: Please give the completed survey to your child's teacher or leave in basket at the Cash Back Table.

Appendix H
Parent University Flyer

Rockridge Parent University

Wednesday, October 22, 1997 7:00-9:00 p.m. Rockridge Jr. High School

The following is a short description of topics that will be offered October 22 at Rockridge Parent University Night. Come and join us! Babysitting will be provided for children age 10 and under.

Session I 7:00 - 7:45

1. Enrichment Programs for Your Child-Junior Theater League
   Presenters: Bonnie Gunther
   We're going to bring Alice, Madhatter, Doormouse and March Hare for a tea party. Learn about this exciting opportunity for your child.

2. Audubon Society
   Presenter: Kathyrn Bland
   Find out how to attract birds year round and identify local species of birds.

3. Children and Substance Abuse
   Presenter: Ben Cleveland - Robert Young Center
   Come learn the parents' roles in prevention and intervention of alcohol and drug use.

4. Quad City Bicycle Club
   Presenter: Dave LaFever
   Find out where your family can bicycle in the QCA.

5. Blackhawk College/WIU 2 Plus 2 Program
   Presenter: Rose Hernandez
   Find out what programs are available, what the application procedures are and if it is possible to obtain financial aid.

6. Line Dancing
   Presenter: Jan and Norman Dunlap
   Come and enjoy! Learn how to line dance.

7. Year-Round School
   Presenters: Rick Loy, Principal, Horace Mann School
   Berni Carmack, Teacher, Horace Mann School
   Find out what the advantages are to year-round school.

8. Travel Opportunities for Students and Adults
   Presenters: Ruth Clayton - Davis, Teacher, Rockridge High School
   Valerie Niclas, Teacher, Ridgewood School
   Affordable travel for anybody - you must make a choice, a new couch or a trip to Europe.

9. Healthy Snacks for Your Child
   Presenter: University of Illinois Cooperation Extension Service, Lupe Badillo
   Tired of the same old snacks for your kids? Make and sample some new healthy recipe ideas your kids will love.

10. Birth Order/Sibling Rivalry-MOMMM!!! Make him stop that!!!
    Presenter: Francy Ricketts, Ph. D., Marriage and Family Therapist, Licensed Clinical Psychologist
    Life with siblings is a child's first lesson in cooperation and competition. We will discuss everyday problems and how parents can cope.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Q-C AREA

Rockridge opens Parent University

By Debora Schaubroeck
Correspondent

EDGINGTON — From line dancing to year-round school to holiday decorating, Parent University, from 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday at Rockridge Junior High School, has something to offer for the district's parents.

Educational and fun topics are available, Tina Sims, principal of Taylor Ridge and Reynolds grade schools and a member of the District Learning Leadership Team, event sponsor, said.

"We thought by offering this parent university night, it would be a good way to get parents involved and acquainted with the school district," she said.

Participants can choose two 45-minute sessions.

Instructors include representatives from the Junior Theater League, Audubon Society, Quad City Bicycle Club, Cornbelt Running Club, Robert Young Center for Community Mental Health, Western Illinois University, Black Hawk College, University of Illinois Co-operative Extension, Rockridge School District staff and others.

Session 1 includes: enrichment programs for your child, how to attract birds, by the Audubon Society, children and substance abuse, Quad City Bicycle Club, Black Hawk College and Western Illinois University on the 2 Plus 2 Program, Line dancing, year-round schools, travel abroad opportunities for students and adults, healthy snacks for your child, and birth order and sibling rivalry.

Session 2 includes: Rockridge School District technology update, Cornbelt Running Club, holiday table settings and decorations, managing parental stress, great fishing spots in the Quad-City area, Career Center Programs, Your Child Is Headed to College — What to Expect, Quad City Bicycle Club, and how to start an investment club.

The Learning Leadership Team felt the program is important to the community.

"If a child sees parents involved in the school system, that child sees the school as being important," Mrs. Sims said. "Parents need to be involved with the school and we thought this would be fun."

Free baby-sitting is offered for children 10 years and younger. Reservations are not needed. For more information, call Andalusia Grade School at 798-2424.

Appendix I
Newspaper Article

Appendix J
Community Calendar Announcement

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

WHAT: A PARENT UNIVERSITY NIGHT HOSTED BY THE ROCKRIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT

WHO: AN OPEN INVITATION TO INTERESTED PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

WHERE: ROCKRIDGE JUNIOR HIGH

WHEN: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22,1997
7:00 TO 9:00 P.M.

WHY: TO PROMOTE ROCKRIDGE AS A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

BABYSITTING WILL BE PROVIDED FOR CHILDREN 10 AND UNDER!

Appendix K
Parent University Booklet

Parent University

Rockridge CUSD #300
October 22, 1997

Welcome to the Rockridge Parent University Night. We are very glad you could join us for an evening of learning and fun. Our goal is to address a few of the many challenges of parenting and points of interest.

A listing of the sessions being presented this evening are included in this booklet. Also included is the location of each meeting, the student host and a brief description of the meeting. Child care is being provided in the High School Home Ec. room for your convenience.

Thank you for participating in the Parent University Night. We hope you enjoy the experience.

Parent University Schedule

7:00-7:45 p.m.	Session I
7:55-8:40 p.m.	Session II
8:45-9:15 p.m.	Exhibits--Refreshments

A SPECIAL THANKS to Mr. Clayton Naylor and the Junior High Staff for the use of their building.

Appendix L
Parent University Survey

PARENT UNIVERSITY SURVEY

1. Please indicate what grade level and school each of your children attend.

K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

_____Andalusia _____Illinois City _____Reynolds _____Taylor Ridge

_____Junior High _____Senior High

2. Check below if you are interested in:

_____attending future Rockridge Parent University Nights

_____volunteering to serve on a Parent University planning committee.
(Please include your name and phone number below.)

_____presenting a topic of interest (Please include your name and phone number below.)

3. How did you hear about Rockridge's first Parent University Night?

_____The Communicator

_____School newsletter

_____School registration

_____Radio

_____TV

_____Other _____

4. Comments:

Appendix M
Grant Application

APPLICATION FOR R.O.E.
TITLE I SUPPORT

ROCK ISLAND COUNTY
REGIONAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION
3430 23rd Avenue
Moline, Il 61265
(309)736-1111

Date 6/17/97

RECEIVED
JUN 24 1997

Directions: Complete this form for district or multi-district cooperative programs and submit to the above address.

Inclusive dates of the proposed program: October - April 1997-98

District or districts involved: Rockridge

Contact person Debbie Mueller (signature) Debbie Mueller Phone 795-1233 (H) 797-2424 (W)

Describe the nature of the program, location, and its intended audience:

See attached sheet

Requested support (consultant, materials, technical assistance, etc.) List each separately.

Description	Cost	Request approved/denied
1. Materials & Supplies for Math Night	$ 433	$ 433
2. Materials & Supplies for Reading Night	$ 110	$ 110
3. Supplies for Family Night	$ 150	$ 150
4. Parent Incentives for Reading Night	$ 300	$ 300 — 22-6/22
*(Attach additional page if needed)	$ 993	$ 993

(Total Requested)

In return for this support, the district will (if applicable):

.....
(Signature)

a. Accomplish
b. Accomplish (Limited/Qualified)
c. Fail to accomplish for these reasons:

Administrative Agent: [signature] Consultant: [signature]

Funds to be encumbered: 72.62 - 333
1400 - 333

Date: 6/24/97

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix N
Family Reading Night Invitation

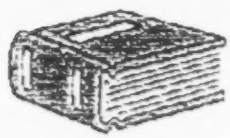
Andalusia School's

Family Reading Night

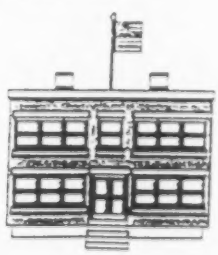
Thursday

November 20, 1997

7:00-8:00 p.m.



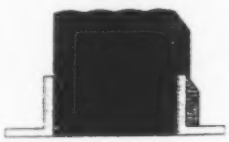
In conjunction with Illinois' Reading Week, Andalusia School will be hosting an exciting evening of reading activities!



Come and be entertained by Beverly Heintz, a professional storyteller, and enjoy reading with your children in their classrooms. R.I.F. distribution by P.T.C. will be held and refreshments will be served!

Appendix O
Reading Night Flyer

Family Reading Night



November 20

Andalusia Elementary School

Storyteller - 7:00

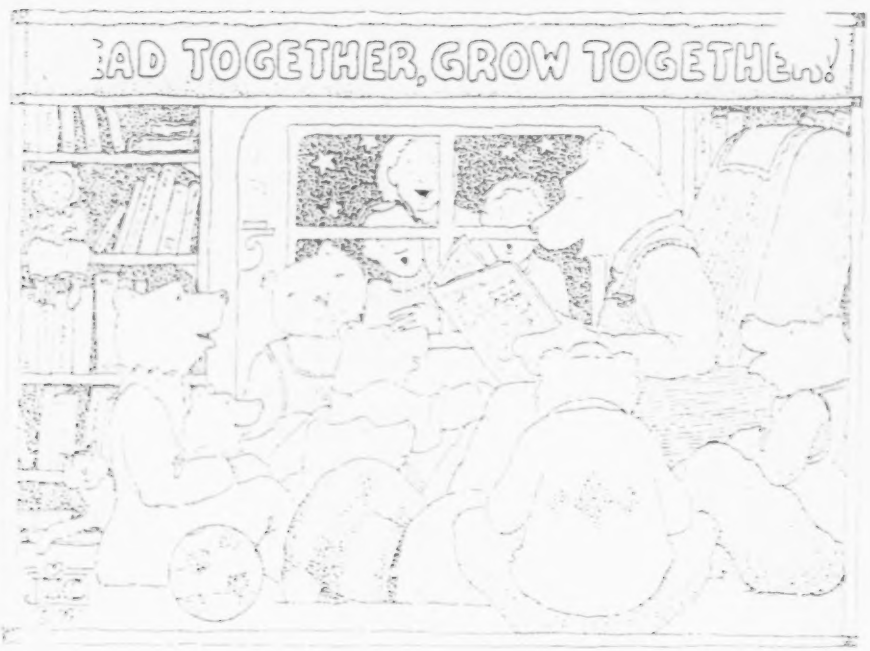
7:30 - 8:00
Visit classrooms
Choose a RIF book
Enjoy refreshments

Reading is at the heart of all learning.

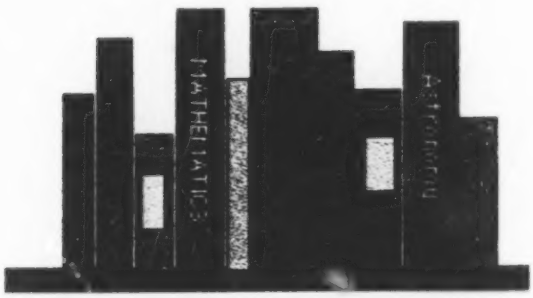
Come and enjoy the evening with us!

The Andalusia Staff

Appendix P
Family Reading Night Postcard



Appendix Q
Reading Night Survey



FAMILY READING NIGHT

1. DID YOUR FAMILY ENJOY THE STORY TELLER?

YES NO

2. DID YOU ENJOY THE OPPORTUNITY TO CHOOSE A R.I.F. BOOK WITH YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN?

YES NO

3. WOULD YOU ATTEND ANOTHER FAMILY READING NIGHT?

YES NO

4. DID YOUR FAMILY ENJOY THE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES?

YES NO

5. PLEASE INDICATE THE GRADE/GRADES OF YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN.

PRE K K 1 2 3 4 5 6

Appendix R
Math Night Flyer

Family Math Night

January 28

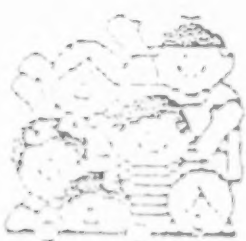
Andalusia Elementary School

6:30 - 7:30

6:30 - Estimation Activities
(In the Gym)

6:45 - Activities in Classrooms

Fun!
Prizes!
Refreshments!



Come and enjoy the evening with us!

Each child must be accompanied
by an adult.

The Andalusia Staff

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix S
Math Night Menu

Family Math Night

The math activities will be held in the following classrooms:

Suggested Grade Level - K through 2

K Treasure Box Patterns
The Number Game

1 Geo Boards
Blast Off

2 Pattern Blocks

Suggested Grade Level - 3 through 6

3 Geo Mirrors

4 CONTIG
Tessellations

5 M & M Math

6 PIG
Probability Game

Appendix T
Family Math Night Survey

FAMILY MATH NIGHT

1. DID YOUR FAMILY ENJOY THE ESTIMATING ACTIVITIES?

YES NO

2. DID YOUR FAMILY ENJOY THE MATH ACTIVITIES IN THE CLASSROOMS?

YES NO

3. WOULD YOU ATTEND ANOTHER FAMILY MATH NIGHT?

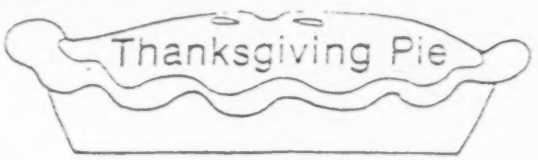
YES NO

4. PLEASE INDICATE THE GRADE/GRADES OF YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN.

K 1 2 3 4 5 6

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix U
Kindergarten Math Pie Graph



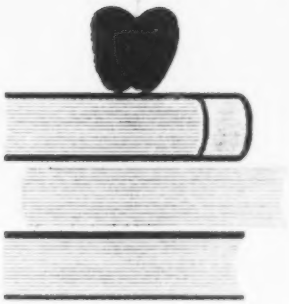
Ask 20 people to describe their favorite pie.
Record it on this graph.

15						
14						
13						
12						
11						
10						
9						
8						
7						
6						
5						
4						
3						
2						
1						
	pumpkin	apple	lemon	banana cream	mince	other

Which pie did most people choose? _____

BLAIR CORP. 1988

Appendix V
First Grade Literature Log



Dear Parents,

Please sign your name next to the take home book that your child reads to you. Also list the other book or books in the bag as your child reads them. Please keep the take home books and return this paper and the other books.

Take Home Books from *Jump Right In*:

1. *What is not Green?* _____
2. *Not in the Morning*_____
3. *A Nap for Pig* _____
4. *Flap and Jump*_____
5. *Come and Play*_____
6. *My Chick*_____
7. *What do you Wish*_____

List of other books.

1. _____

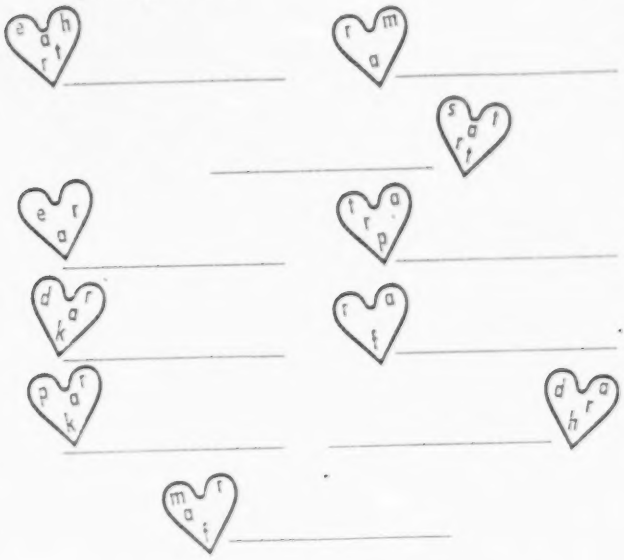
2. _____

Appendix W
Second Grade Spelling Activity Sheet

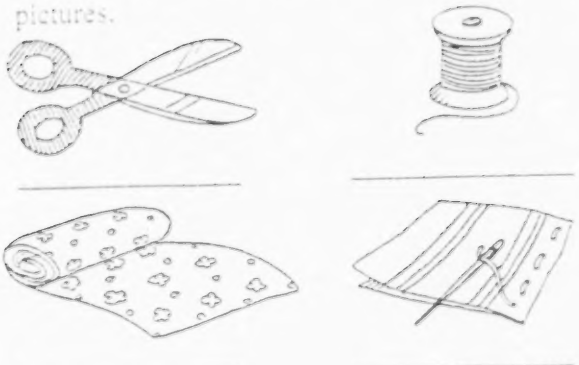
Name _____

Spelling Practice

A. Study the Spelling Words. Say each word to yourself. Use the letters in each heart to spell a Spelling Word.



B. Write the Words to Explore under their pictures.



Spelling Words

1. arm
2. are
3. far
4. heart
5. dark
6. hard
7. farm
8. park
9. start
10. part

Words to Explore

material
sewing
scissors
thread

Appendix X
Fourth Grade Homework Sheet

TODAY IS _____ 19___
DAY MONTH DATE

SUBJECT	ASSIGNMENT	DUE
MATH		COMPLETE ☐
SCIENCE		COMPLETE ☐
SOCIAL STUDIES		COMPLETE ☐
ENGLISH/ LANGUAGE ARTS		COMPLETE ☐
READING		COMPLETE ☐
SPELLING		COMPLETE ☐
		COMPLETE ☐
		COMPLETE ☐

THINGS TO REMEMBER!
Take Home

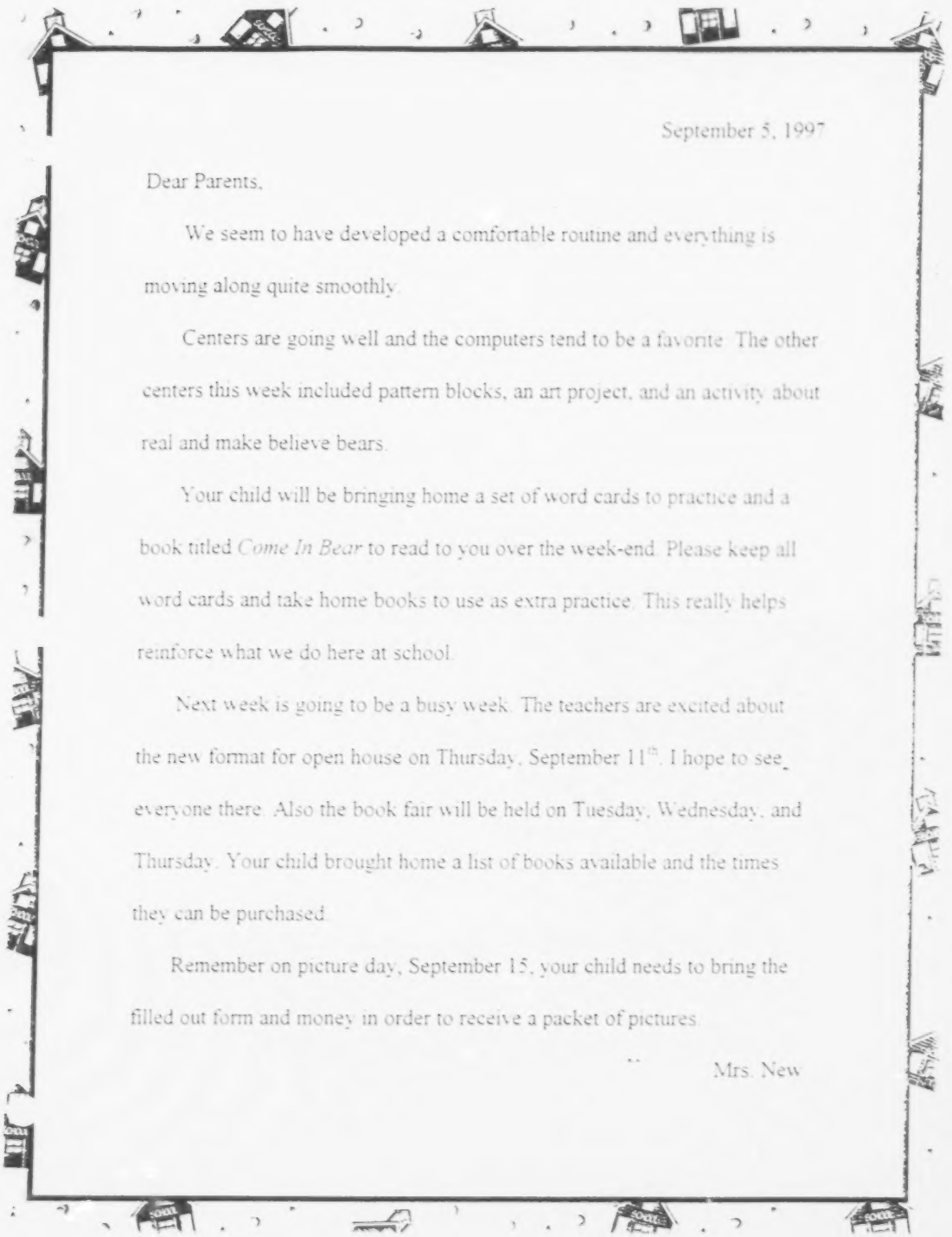
Bring to School

Teacher Messages

Parent Messages

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix Y
First Grade Newsletter



September 5, 1997

Dear Parents,

We seem to have developed a comfortable routine and everything is moving along quite smoothly.

Centers are going well and the computers tend to be a favorite. The other centers this week included pattern blocks, an art project, and an activity about real and make believe bears.

Your child will be bringing home a set of word cards to practice and a book titled *Come In Bear* to read to you over the week-end. Please keep all word cards and take home books to use as extra practice. This really helps reinforce what we do here at school.

Next week is going to be a busy week. The teachers are excited about the new format for open house on Thursday, September 11th. I hope to see everyone there. Also the book fair will be held on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Your child brought home a list of books available and the times they can be purchased.

Remember on picture day, September 15, your child needs to bring the filled out form and money in order to receive a packet of pictures.

Mrs. New

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix Z
Fourth Grade Calendar

Week of: Nov 10 Week of: Nov 17

	1st Book Report Due Math- Begin Chapter 1 Music	No School Veterans Day PE	April 10th Test Art- Mr. [illegible] PE	Begin special science unit on Oceans! Dramatic Literary Music	Spelling Test 10 DOL QUIZ READ READ READ PE
Mon. 11	Tues. 12	Wed. 13	Thurs. 14	Fri. 15	Sat. 16
PE	Music	Incorrect Spelling Test 10 TIME TO READ PE	Family Reading Night Taco Supper Audubon School Refreshments! Story teller! BIF book distribution!	Present Unit Spelling Test 10 Book report Due Nov 20th! PE	

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Appendix AA
Parent/Teacher Conference - Parent Survey Results

Andalusia
11-7-97

PARENT SURVEY

on the
PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCE
NOVEMBER 1997

Will you please help us evaluate the effectiveness of our Parent-Teacher Conference by completing this brief survey.

1.	Was this your first contact with your child's teacher(s)?	21 Yes	77 No
2.	Was the time scheduled for conferences convenient for you?	98 Yes	0 No
3.	Was the conference session informative for you as a parent?	96 Yes	2 No
4.	Does this type of Parent/Teacher Conference activity help in understanding the educational progress of your child?	98 Yes	0 No
5.	Did you feel you had enough privacy during your Parent/Teacher Conference?	93 Yes	0 No
6.	Did you feel sufficient time was provided for your Parent/Teacher Conference?	93 Yes	5 No
7.	Should there be a similar conference program during the next school year (97-98)?	98 Yes	0 No
8.	Should conferences be held at a different time of the year? (If you answer yes, please explain below.)	12 Yes	86 No

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

9. Do you have any suggestions and/or comments to improve the Parent/Teacher Conferences?

Appendix BB
Parent/Teacher Conference - Teacher Survey Results

Rockridge C.U.S.D. #300
Teacher Survey on
Parent-Teacher Conferences
November 1997

Teaching Level K-3 _X_ 4-6 _X_ 7-8 _____ 9-12 ____

1. In general, did you find the P-T Conferences to be:

   __9__ very helpful

   _____ somewhat helpful

   _____ not very helpful

   _____ a waste of time

2. Approximately how many conferences did you have?

   __1__ 0-10

   __3__ 10-20

   __5__ 20-30

   _____ more than 30

3. Students did not attend school either day. Should we continue this practice?

   __9__ yes _____no

   _____ no response

4. P-T Conferences are tentatively set for November 5 and 6, 1998.

   __9__ These dates are OK

   _____ I would recommend the dates _____

   _____ I would prefer to not have P-T Conferences

   _____ Other _____

5. Any other suggestions and/or comments? --

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Family Reading Night
First Grade P M I

P

I liked picking out my R.I.F. book.

I won a gift certificate to Waldenbooks.

I liked the story about a kangaroo.

I liked reading mom and dad the books I had picked out.

I liked the storyteller.

We got to take home our R.I.F. book and read it.

I picked out my mom's favorite book about sharks.

I liked reading the big books in our room to my mom.

M

It took too long to pick out our R.I.F. book.

The gym was noisy before the storyteller started.

I wished we could have sat on the stage.

I didn't like sitting on the floor.

My dad kept talking to his friend during the storyteller.

I

There were lots of R.F.I. books to pick from.

Lot's of people were at our school.

The gym was full of people listening to the storyteller.

We got to help the storyteller.

The storyteller asked the front row if she could do a story she had done before.

Appendix DD
Favorite Math Activity Tally Graph

Family Math Night Tally Graph

Favorite Activities

Treasure Box Patterns //

The Number Game 𝍸 //

Geo Boards /

Blast Off 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 𝍸 /

Pattern Blocks 𝍸

Geo Mirrors ///

CONTIG 𝍸 //

Tessellations

M & M Math ///

Probability Game /